Q. David Bowers, Editor
Rare Coin Review
Box 1224
Wolfeboro, NH 03894

July 6, 1989

Dear Dave,

I've developed a particular interest in Machin's Mills counterfeit British halfpence over the last few years and have been "picking-up", here and there, anything that may even look like a Machin's Mill "imitation" halfpence. So far, I've only been able to aquire one such Machin's Mill, that I'm sure of (Vlack 8-74A), using my "hit and miss" strategy.

Recently, I aquired what I believe to be a British counterfeit 1776 halfpence. It seems to be of exceptional quality and condition (for any counterfeit of this era). The Obverse portrait has a distinguishable hairline and ear-lobe. All wear seems to be limited to the wreath in the central part of the head. It has a distinct double chin and obviously added lips and eyelid. The letter punch style is that with curved split serifs at the bottom of most of the letters. This has lead me to much speculation as to who may be responsible for engraving this particular coin.

The Reverse is strikingly similar to Vlack 76A. The shield is very clear and definetly of the (generally accepted) fimbriated crosses British style. Another point of interest is the hair bun. It is two distinct circles of perhaps better described as a crude 8.

My question is: Since such coins (counterfeit halfpence of British origin) were so much a part of early American history, why hasn't there been more research into THEIR (emphasis added) origins? Other coins of British origin (Hibernia, Kentucky token, etc., etc.) have been generally accepted as part of Colonial and early Americana, but, these British counterfeit half-pence have been shoved aside as if they never existed of circulated in America. I have reasonable evidence that the above coin was in fact part of a shipment of British "hardware" and probably been in this country perhaps 200 years.

It just doesn't seem fair! Regardless, this coin will have a prominent place in MY (emphasis added) Colonial & State collection. Thank you for letting me get my "two cents" in, and I would appreciate greatly your opinion.

Sincerely,

Byron K. Weston

Byron K. Weston
Box 285, R.D. 1
Julian, PA 16844
[redacted]

BOWERS AND MERENA GALLERIES, INC.

BOX 1224
WOLFEBORO, NH 03894
(603) 569-5095
Fax line: (603) 569-5319

July 17, 1989

Mr. Byron K. Weston
Box 285, R.D. #1
Julian, PA 16844

Dear Byron:

Thank you for your letter which was waiting for me when I returned from an extended trip. I have taken the liberty of sending a copy of your letter and a copy of my present reply to Eric P. Newman, who has a deep knowledge in Machin's Mills half-pence and related issues and who may be able to provide some guidance. Further, I will send a copy of this letter and my reply to Jim Spilman, editor of "The Colonial Newsletter," and will ask him to send you a sample copy of the Newsletter if you are not already a subscriber. Numerous back issues of the Newsletter deal with Machin's Mills pieces.

Good luck with your collecting interests.

Sincerely yours,

Q. David Bowers

QDB/mkv

Copies to:
Eric P. Newman
James Spilman

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY

6450 Cecil Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63105

July 28, 1989

Mr. Byron K. Weston
Box 285 R.D. 1
Julian, PA 16844

Dear Mr. Weston:

As you know, my friend David Bowers has referred to us your letter of July 6, 1989. I can assure you the interest in counterfeit British 1/2 pence is growing extensively among American collectors.

As to your 1776 piece, you should send us a picture if you want more information on it. There are many varieties of British origin of that date.

Are you familiar with our article on 1785 and 1781 counterfeit British 1/2 pence in Museum Notes 33 published by the American Numismatic Society? Are you familiar with our 1976 article on British and Bungtown Halfpence included in Studies on Money in Early America? If not, you might wish to read them. They can be obtained from American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 155th Street, New York, NY 10032. You were already advised to locate the comments on halfpence in Colonial Newsletter.

I believe you realize how complex this subject is and how exciting it is to work on.

Sincerely yours,

Eric P. Newman

EPN:bv

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC EDUCATION SOCIETY
6450 Cecil Avenue
St. Louis, Missouri 63105

Aug. 16,1989

Dear Mr. Newman:

Thank you very much for your letter of July 28 regarding my interest in counterfeit British ½ pence.

This is, without a doubt, the most fascinating area of American numismatics. I can assure you that I am aware of the complexities and have a great appreciation to those who "delve" into this and other like areas of Colonial and early American Numismatics. I can only repeat what others have said about your own efforts. You have helped keep Numismatics the hobby that it is for me and others who still have the "wonderment" of collecting deep in our very souls.

I will be getting a letter out to the AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY requesting information on obtaining the 2 articles to which you referred me. I was particularly impressed with THE COLONIAL NEWSLETTER and have decided to become a member. The index of past issues only made me thirst for more, so I am ordering all the back issues as well.

As I am sure you are aware, getting a photo of old dark copper is no easy task, so I would be more than willing to send my 1776 counterfeit British ½ pence to you, at your request. I am insatiably curious as to its' provenance. I would also like to mention that I have 2 other pieces (of a lesser quality) I also suspect of being counterfeits of British origin. One is a George II ½ pence of 1722 and the other a 1775 piece similar to, but very much cruder than the 1776 piece.

Obviously dealers are not generally aware that such things exist. These and the Machins' Mills counterfeit, I mentioned in my letter to Dave Bowers,were all purchased from sellers not aware of what they were actually selling me. My own research then revealed to me the true nature of these blind "hit or miss" purchases. Living in the East may give me certain advantages as well.

I will leave you with one last question: Were Hibernia issues counterfeited also? If so, I may just have one or two of those also!

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Byron K. Weston

Byron K. Weston
Box 285, R.D. 1
Julian, PA 16844

Byron K. Weston
c/o Colonial Newsletter
[redacted]

September 7, 1999

Dear Byron:

Although a letter addressed to you in Milesberg, PA might reach you more quickly. I want to be sure that my "prophetic" comments continue to keep you at full speed.

Your article entitled "Evasion Hybrids - the Missing Link" has been read and reread by me. You are far ahead on the first leg of the relay race but there are three more legs to be run. Pass the baton to yourself and keep it up.

I congratulate you on your fine study and thank you for using the work some of us did in the past as stimulation for what you are now doing.

My large collection of counterfeit British halfpence still awaits thorough examination. Ringo has seen it. Smith has seen some of it. Perhaps you will in due course be able to classify the varieties together with examples from other collections to produce a master work.

Stay excited and thrive.

Sincerely,

Eric P. Newman

Byron Weston
[redacted]

October 18, 2000

Registered Mail

Dear Byron:

Thank you for the opportunity of seeing your 52-85B. It weighed 8.0 grams and is coin turn. In texture it matches those I am familiar with. It has many small pock marks on the obverse face and neck. It is in my opinion a genuine 1785 counterfeit.

If you find that you can trace its source back to the nineteenth century I would be interested in knowing.

It is up to you to determine whether the Cobwright 1993 inclusion is relevant and what it means.

Keep finding interesting pieces.

Thrive,

Eric P. Newman

Cc: Gary A. Trudgen
1729 Terrace Dr.
Vestal, NY 13850

Subj: **Article for CNL attached for your comments**
Date: 3/10/2009 5:05:56 P.M. Central Daylight Time
From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]

Gentlemen,

Attached is an article I've submitted to the Colonial Newsletter for publication in the August issue. I would like to finalize it by mid April and would appreciate any comments you may have about it before then.

Thank you,
Byron Weston

Subj: **1784 Counterfeit British halfpence**
Date: 3/13/2009 3:51:56 P.M. Central Daylight Time
From: [redacted]
To:

Dear Byron Weston
On 3/10/09 you sent to me and two others a draft of an article on the above subject (entitled Batty 3826: Vlack 14 84A Reconsidered) and requested prompt commentary.
I read it quickly and realize how much work you have done on it and your sincerity in wishing to clarify the subject matter. I have not sent copies of this response to the others at this time.
Bob Vlack did a wonderful study of the subject long ago and I was privileged to help him. I do not know if you have submitted the current draft of your article to him.

I do not find in the draft a mention of the content of page 207 of Crosby which stated that on October 18, 1785 counterfeit coppers were being made by Americans and fellow citizens of Connecticut. Accordingly long ago I was interested in trying to identify what these counterfeits were. I knew of only one variety with the date of 1784 which was just before the application for coining privileges in Connecticut. I submitted this item to Vlack as a probable American struck piece when I submitted my Machins information to him. I suggested that the die varieties of the reverse begin with the last two numbers of the date. I felt that including the 1784 item would be proper whether or not it was Machins because it was so weakly struck, so crude and unusual in design and had a unique and contemporary date. I felt that there was no reason to artificially predate a counterfeit. Failing to disclose the coin I felt would not be sound thinking even though it was dated several years before Machins began. We knew then some Machins were predated.

You make a point that Batty and Hammond listed the 1784 piece in their English accumulated collections and may think that seems to show the item was made in England. Remember that both of these men collected their coppers well along in the 19th century after British counterfeit halfpence coppers were no longer in circulation in the United States. They easily could have been shipped from America to England as bulk copper for melting as England had better facilities for rolling and preparing sheet copper for engraving, planchet preparation and other purposes. These collectors could have arranged to look over and pick out such selected pieces before the melt.

After you receive comments from others and have considered mine you may wish to make additions to your draft.

Keep researching and writing. Eric P. Newman

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